

Open your ears and listen well



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My Business

I strongly believe that the better you are at something, the more you need coaching. Top sports performers such as Usain Bolt and Andy Murray work with their coaches on a daily basis, always looking for that extra edge.

Most large companies offer business coaches, while entrepreneurs can select from the myriad of organisations and individuals that offer coaching.

My advice on selecting a coach is no different to selecting any good supplier. First, find someone you like

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personally who has proven experience superior to your own. Then, prepare carefully before the meetings and measure the value for money provided. Finally, if the relationship is becoming stale, look elsewhere.

Business coaches typically use techniques drawn from Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) that are sometimes derided.

NLP receives a bad press when it is applied by the manipulative and unscrupulous, such as pseudo-psychologists or professional speakers in the personal development space whose only objective is to elicit credit card details from the unwary.

A coach with integrity, excellent personal credentials and a firm grounding in NLP can make a significant difference to entrepreneurs by increasing their self-awareness while providing a regular action plan for achieving their goals.

Robbie Steinhouse is not only a successful serial entrepreneur, he is also a highly effective business

coach. As well as property and insurance businesses, he also runs an NLP school and has just published a new book, *How to Coach with NLP*, for aspiring practitioners.

The key premise of Steinhouse's approach is that to expand a business successfully, an entrepreneur has to use coaching skills on a daily basis.

The biggest factors in business failure are not adverse market conditions or competition, they are lack of self-awareness on the part of entrepreneurs and their inability to recruit and keep a quality team.

Coaching skills enable entrepreneurs to understand their own weaknesses, build a complementary team of people, and let them get on without undue interference.

The most important skill any entrepreneur can learn from good coaching is the art of listening. Bank managers and investors are always providing good advice, but entrepreneurs often dismiss what they are being told. It is always a shock when an important employee leaves to start another rival company. Looking back, the signs were always there: they tried to explain that they were unhappy, but the entrepreneur chose not to listen.

Steinhouse's book is a comprehensive and well-structured guide to both NLP and the art of coaching, essential reading for anyone who wants to build a team in a small business.

Above all, it shows how an entrepreneur can emerge from the other side of success with their sanity intact and remaining friends with all the people they worked with along the way.

Over the years, I have come to realise that the hardest lessons to learn are those of self-awareness and how to recognise one's own character flaws and limitations. This process is made much easier by the expert listening skills of a good coach, who is on exactly the same journey.

'How to Coach with NLP'
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